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# I. F. Stone's Weekly

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## Making America A Police State

The most important event of the past week at home or abroad was the issuance by the Subversive Activities Control Board of its first order. The Board was established by the Internal Security Act of 1950 which President Truman, in vetoing it, called "the greatest danger to freedom of speech, press and assembly since the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798." The Act requires the registration of "Communist action" and "Communist front" organizations. It went into operation on April 20 when the Board issued an order requiring the Communist party to register as a "Communist action" organization. Two days later the Attorney General announced that he was petitioning the Board to order twelve other organizations to register as "Communist fronts."

Ostensibly these actions affected only a minority party and a dozen organizations regarded as within its political orbit. The party is relatively if not absolutely the smallest Communist party in any Western country enjoying political liberty. According to J. Edgar Hoover's latest annual official estimate (see the *Weekly* for April 11), it now has less than 25,000 members. Its top leaders are in jail. It is dwindling in size and influence; the membership, according to the FBI chief, is half what it was in 1950.

The organizations named as "Communist fronts" by the Attorney General have been so harried by Congressional investigators and miscellaneous prosecutions that only a handful of hardy folk still dare belong to them, or turn up at their meetings. That these few should be made the target of yet another proceeding does not say very much for the self-confidence of those now in power in America, nor for their faith in the capacity of their own ideas to survive under conditions of free competition.

The situation would be ludicrous were the impact of the new statute limited to the vermiform appendix of American Communism, a movement unable in its heyday—unlike the Communist parties of Britain, France or Italy—to elect a single open, real or avowed Communist to public office. But the effect of the act is not to be measured by its apparent purposes. The effect is sharply to step up the hazards of non-conformity in America. To the dangers of smear via Congressional committee and loss of employment through various forms of loyalty purge and blacklist is now added the possibility of being haled before the Subversive Activities Control Board on a charge of failing to register as a Communist. The penalty for non-registration is five years in jail, a $10,000 fine, or both.

Once an organization is ordered to register, the path of radicals suspected of being members is lined with legal pitfalls. It becomes a felony for a member of a Communist organization to apply for a passport, to take a government job, or to work in a defense plant without disclosing his politics. Publications and broadcasts emanating from an organization ordered to register must be labelled as "Disseminated by a Communist organization." The words are those of the Act. A series of possible prosecutions opens up in which the burden of proof—and the burden of proof to prove a negative proposition—will be on the accused in trials held in an atmosphere hardly conductive to objective judgment. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, it will be all the wiser to keep one's mouth shut and to take no chances. The rabbit will replace the eagle as our national emblem.

This Act was intended to make it unsafe to question the status quo. Its passage over President Truman's veto was the triumph of a campaign master-minded by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce to give America our own slick chrome-plated version of Fascism. The strategy of the Mundt-Nixon, Mundt-Ferguson and McCarran bills which eventuated in the Act was simple. Peaceful social reform is the product of free associations acting as pressure groups. If it could be made risky to associate, social reform could be stifled at the roots. Since there are few social reforms the Communists do not also support, there are few reform movements which cannot be attacked as vaguely "communistic" once enough suspicion and hysteria have been created. An Act requiring organizations in effect to prove that they are not subject to registration as communistic is an Act calculated to frighten away all but the most intrepid. It is also a means of giving the secret police wider authority for surveillance over the political thinking and activity of the American people. The more the Communists are driven underground the more excuse the FBI has to peer into every meeting and every mind.

The question is not whether the Communists are part of an international movement; of course they are. The question is not whether these organizations named by the Attorney General are "fronts"; let it be assumed that they are. The question is whether we are to abandon the standards and habits of a free society, fleeing the risks of freedom for the deadlier risks of repression. The question is whether we are to relinquish the standards of Jefferson for those of Torquemada.

The McCarrans and the McCarthys are the tools of big business organizations in a real conspiracy to convert America into a corporate State. The Supreme Court has yet to say the final word on the medieval monstrosity of a "Subversive Activities Control Board" in a supposedly free society. The coming appeal against this first registration order is one which every believer in fundamental American principles must support or live to regret his betrayal of all that made this country great in the past.



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# Military Press Agents, Peace and POW Atrocities

The American military are well staffed with advertising and publicity men in uniform. The Korean war from the start has been given Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborne treatment. The news has been screened, molded, cut and rearranged. The purpose has been to *make* public opinion, not to inform it. The war has been handled like a soap-selling campaign. This is the background against which to examine the flare-up of atrocity stories last week in the American press.

There are two points, not one, to be noted, however. One is that the American military in the Far East by their deft handling of the POW news showed themselves as anxious as ever to poison the public mind against peace. But the other is that the Eisenhower Administration demonstrated its own desire for a settlement in Korea by putting the damper on these stories and on the attempt to amplify atrocity charges by means of Congressional "investigations".

This inconsistency of policy will puzzle those who imagine the American government is a coordinated affair. The fact is that the White House has always had difficulty in controlling Tokyo HQ. The fact also is that while the White House had favored a limited war and now wants "disengagement" from Korea, Tokyo HQ has always wanted a military victory even at the risk of a Third World War.

### "If True"

Like Truman before him, Eisenhower showed no disposition to take the atrocity stories at face value. When the first big atrocity story broke in November 1951, Truman said it was terrible "if true" (See "Atrocities to the Rescue" and "Weird Statistics" in my *Hidden History of the Korean War*).

When Eisenhower was asked about the new flare-up last week, he said (direct quotation forbidden) that he still was not in a position to separate facts from, let us say, just isolated instances and was not prepared to express any sweeping conclusions. The strongest expression used by Eisenhower was that the POW's had been subjected to difficult treatment.

The day before the President's press conference, Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith appeared at a closed session of the Senate Appropriations Committee. When the hearing was over, the chairman, Senator Bridges, had decided that it would be better not to upset the exchange of prisoners by investigating atrocities now. Timely intervention had prevented what might well have turned into another China Lobby field day.

### Suppressing Lies

This is not a case of suppressing the truth but soft-pedaling lies. The weight of the evidence indicates that since the Chinese entered the Korean war, there has been a marked improvement in the treatment of prisoners. Earlier horrors occurred largely in connection with the headlong retreat of the North Koreans in the Fall of 1950. This is when the so-called "Death Marches" took place.

Indeed what worried the military on the eve of the prisoner exchange was that too many people might learn that the Chinese were *not* mistreating prisoners. The "Fact Sheet" issued by the Pentagon on the eve of the exchange was intended to put this in as bad a light as possible.

"While their use of brutality and physical mistreatment of peoples is well documented and widely understood," the *Fact Sheet* began, "the Communists have also attempted to use deceptively soft and ingratiating treatment if that promises to serve their purpose. These 'leniency' and 'good treatment' methods are less well known or understood."

### Page George Orwell

Having prepared the mind for the revelation that the Chinese had not been torturing prisoners, this is the lush double-talk in which the news was clothed by the *Fact Sheet* (how like George Orwell's 1984 to call this a "fact sheet"!):

"When Korean, American and United Nations soldiers first set out to halt the Communist aggression in Korea," the *Fact Sheet* said, "the story of Communist treatment of prisoners was one of crude brutality. But after the Chinese Communists entered the conflict, the policy of dealing with prisoners appeared to undergo an abrupt change, although, needless to say, brutalities continued to be reported.

"Apparently the order was spread throughout the Communist armies that captured prisoners were to be treated with kindness and leniency."

How horrible!

### "It Would Not Be Fair"

The military did not confine themselves to issuing this "Fact Sheet." When the exchange began, returning prisoners were "processed" and "screened". Not all were allowed to speak with the press. "The identity card of one American," the Associated Press reported (Washington Times-Herald, April 21), "was marked on the back, 'no interviews', persumably because of pro-Red leanings." It would be interesting to know what the military considered "Pro-Red leanings."

A more revealing glimpse of what was happening came from the British press where *Reuter's* reported from Panmunjom (*London Times*, April 21) "General Clark, who flew from Tokyo to greet the returning prisoners, said: 'Some of our chaps coming back have obviously been swayed by Communist 'brain washing.' He said these prisoners would not be available for interviews as 'it would not be fair'."

### Through British Eyes

Few American readers must have realized that access to prisoners was limited and that interviews with these regarded as "pro-Red" were not allowed. The result was to high-light the atrocity stories at the expense of a more balanced view. To read the stories as they came through in the air mail edition of the Times of London was to get a completely different impression from that created in the American press.

April 21: "No British prisoner complained of unduly harsh treatment by the Chinese; the consensus was that they had been treated as prisoners, with occasional good will gestures by their captors. . . . Hospital treatment was generally fair, and the prisoners spoke well of their doctors and nurses."

April 22: "It seems that in some camps attempts at political education were more intense than in others . . . at first . . . attendance was virtually compulsory, but of late months such activities had largely ceased, as most of the men showed no interest in them. Food, which was bad at first . . . improved as time went on, and the prisoners were allowed to run their own kitchens and even to slaughter their own pigs, which the Communists supplied in droves."

April 23: "United Nations officials and correspondents . . . described reports that non-Koreans were sent on death marches as 'greatly exaggerated' . . . 'death marches,' occurred late in 1950 when the Communists were retreating rapidly. Their prisoners had to make forced marches, too, and those who could not keep up were abandoned in the cold. Many died."

April 24; "Certainly so far there is no definite proof of any deliberate campaign of atrocities by the Chinese and North Koreans. . . . Something like a competition in atrocity-mongering is developing between the Communists and the United Nations and there is a real danger that the bad feeling engendered by these allegations may jeopardize the success of the armistice negotiations."

### Dissipating Good-Will

The propaganda purpose was plain enough in some of the worst horror stories. The campaign reached its height in the afternoon papers of Wednesday,

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## McCarthy, Wechsler And A Free Press

It is ironic that the first target of McCarthy in American journalism should be an editor who advanced his own career by deft use of anti-Communism in inner newspaper politics. One editor after another made James Wechsler a protegé only to be repaid with a self-serving Red smear: Leo Huberman, whom Wechsler thus succeeded as labor editor of *PM;* Ralph Ingersoll, whom he later tried to succeed as editor of *PM;* and Ted O. Thackrey, Wechsler's predecessor as editor of the *New York Post,* who gave Wechsler a job after the latter left *PM* in a self-ignited blaze of anti-Communist glory.

It is to Wechsler's credit that as editor of the *New York Post* he has followed the liberal Democratic line rather than the *New Leader's.* Within the Americans for Democratic Action he has fought for a more liberal position than that advocated by his columnist, the ignominious Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., whom Carey McWilliams in the *New Statesman and Nation* last year called "a McCarthy with a Harvard accent." Schlesinger has used his column in the *New York Post* to smear those liberals who have had the temerity to defend the rights of Communists, and thereby organize a principled opposition to McCarthyism.

Not much principle was left by the way Wechsler himself answered McCarthy. "No doubt," Wechsler wrote of his experience in the *New York Post* last Monday, "I could have found numerous legal grounds for refusing to answer many of the questions addressed to me that were clearly beyond the boundary of proper Congressional inquiry and a flagrant invasion of the area of press freedom. In an earlier American time I doubt that any editor should have responded to some of the inquiries."

Wechsler's decision to answer was understandable. "It is probably a measure of the ground we have lost," he went on, "that I knew McCarthy could successfully twist any silence to his own advantage." He felt boxed in by Pegler, Winchell and McCarthy. But there was no need to go on and hurt other people by saying, "The Communists, of course, have intensified the problem by hiding behind constitutional privileges on all occasions". This was to slur the basic constitutional privilege he compromised by acquiescing in interrogation. Many have invoked the privilege as their only way to avoid what they considered improper questions.

Wechsler is an ex-Communist and ex-Communists are only safe in America if they turn informer and run with the pack. Wechsler is a target because he has refused to follow in the footsteps of Budenz or Rushmore. But the effort at the same time to defend himself with certificates of good behavior is painful to watch.

### Odd Testimonials

"For the record," Wechsler wrote of his executive session with McCarthy, "I noted that at the time I was appointed editor of the Post in May, 1949, I had received a letter of congratulations from Lew Nichols, then public relations man for J. Edgar Hoover and now deputy director of the FBI. McCarthy gazed out the window. I introduced a letter I received from Richard Nixon in 1950, praising an editorial I had written on the conviction of Alger Hiss. McCarthy was bored." Others may be just a little bit bored, too, by these testimonials.

The right to dissent was not established and will not be preserved by submitting certificates of conformity. McCarthy had no right to question Wechsler, but McCarthyism cannot be fought effectively until men are prepared to deny the right of Congress to interrogate any American, newspaperman or not, anti-Communist or not, on his political beliefs. Neither Wechsler's own mode of defense nor the vast indifference of the American press to this first attack on an editor is promising. As we go to press, only the *Washington Post* (McCarthy's probable next target) has had the interest or the courage to protest.

## Military Press Agents, Peace and POW Atrocities

(Continued from Page Two)

April 22, in this country when the New York Journal American had 2,165 UN prisoners victims of atrocities and the New York World Telegram page one headline screamed, "PWs Bayonetted by Reds; Wounded Pushed Off Cliff."

The World Telegram story was a UP dispatch from Tokyo. After summarizing a series of horrors, the dispatch reported, "Allied officers refused to comment on the disclosures, nor would they say what effect they would have on the truce talks. But it was certain the stories of the returned prisoners, coupled with the violent attacks on the UN by the Red China Peiping radio, had abolished any good will which might have resulted from the sick and wounded exchange." There was satisfaction evident between the lines.

This story was a prize example of atrocity propaganda. The lead said, "Liberated American soldiers told today of seeing American war prisoners 'pushed off a cliff and left there to die' during a horror filled Korean death march and how others were deliberately bayonetted by Chinese guards in a Red prison camp."

### Typical Atrocity Tale

But the story bore out neither the head nor the lead. The lead said American "soldiers" (plural) told of "seeing" POW's pushed over a cliff. But the dispatch quoted only one soldier, a Private William Moreland of Atlanta, Georgia, and he did not say he *saw* this happen. What he said was, according to that same dispatch, "I just heard that there were some wounded kicked over the cliff."

As for the "bayonetting" this was its basis, "Cpl. Donald K. Legay, Leominster, Mass., said 'jumpy' Chinese Communist guards jabbed two or three American prisoners with bayonets when they refused to cooperate and walked out of a Communist movie theatre."

The Korean correspondent of the London Daily Mirror warned on April 24 against the horror stories being published in the American press as "greatly exaggerated versions of tales told to correspondents." He cabled his paper, "It is obvious that the South Korean government authorities will allow repatriated soldiers to talk to the press only if they talk of atrocities."

It would be an exaggeration to say that this was true of the American military. There is evidence, if our dispatches are read closely, that American prisoners testified to good treatment in the camps, especially after the Chinese took over. But it is also clear that a relatively small group was made available for interviewing, and that the public relations officers and the American press focussed largely on horror instead of seeking to provide a fair picture. This distortion hurts the chances of peace and hardly helps those Americans still left prisoner in enemy hands.



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JENNINGS PERRY'S PAGE

# Rehashing Atrocities May Make Hash of Peace Hopes

My grandfather, God rest him, was a P.O.W. Wounded and captured at Resaca (a minie ball in the heel), he was held for four months at a Yankee prison in Indiana. The food was pretty awful: he lost 18 pounds. Meanwhile Sherman's "horde" burned his barns, tore down his fences and made off with his corn and his cattle. . . . I was brought up on those atrocities.

My wife's grandfather, a New Yorker (God rest him, too), was wounded and taken at Bull Run and barely survived Libby Prison at Richmond. The story handed down on that side was just the other way around: the Rebels were the "beasts."

And so, a couple of lifetimes later, at Panmunjom; to say nothing of all the wars between. Each side gets back its men, that have been in the enemy's hands, and immediately begins to pry from them the proof that the enemy is as brutal as all along he has been alleged to be. The world is supposed to be shocked anew, and its hatred of "the enemy" revived.

What anybody stands to gain from this exchange of unpleasantries is hard to see, and the target world, I suspect, remembering how it has been always the same in war after war, is not really shocked. It has had no reason to expect one war to be nicer than another. In its moments of repentance and resolve it has perceived and proclaimed that war itself is in contempt of reason, a regression from civilization: it cannot be unprepared for the revelation that a part of a great barbarity is also barbarous.

We have done well to rejoice for and with our exchanged prisoners, that they have lived to return home; and we have shared to the fullest extent possible the natural delight of their next of kin—caught for us on film, on the TV screen and in the printed report.

But the exchange of the wounded and sick has grand importance only if it prefaces an armistice to halt the replenishment of the prison camp hospitals with new litter cases—and new amputees. And there is no service of this end in the labors of our propaganda, and of the other side's propaganda, to show, by selected accounts fished for in the testimony of the RPs, that cruelty to prisoners has been the rule.

After all, if humanity hopes to succeed in its prudent attempt to bring the war to a close by an act of intelligence instead of by the attrition of artillery, there can be no question of war crimes courts to be set up afterward. There will be no victor to sit in judgment and no vanquished to be tried and punished. There will be agreement, either understood or explicit, that the war never should have begun and that by ending it the race shall have at last lived up to its proud claim of rationality. Under the circumstances the rehashing of the charges of bestiality toward prisoners is pointless.

By no means all of our RPs have brought back stories of ill-treatment and we must assume that not all of the prisoners our side has held have gone back across the Parallel to cry witness to our "inhumanity." It is regrettable that the experiences related by these more fortunate P.O.W.s have not been given at least equal circulation with the reports of "death marches," starvation and "medical murder." For our part, it is no disparagement of the hardships our captured soldiers have undergone to recall that their removal to the enemy's rear over roads under constant attack by our own air force could not but have been hazardous; and the other side has plenty of evidence in the condition of its men turned over at Panmunjom that neither our doctors nor our mess sergeants have *tried* to exterminate them.

I hope excitable people like Sen. Stiles Bridges will keep their shirts on—or put them back on. It would help for reasonable people like Sen. Sherman Cooper to take them aside and accustom them to the fact that the facts of war are ugly. My P.O.W. grandfather lived long enough after his war to concede that Yankees were fairly representative human beings, and his opposite number, though he may never have shaken off the horrors of Libby, did pass on life to descendants who could marry South without too grave a sense of degradation. By blaming war instead of each other it will be easier one day for Americans and Chinese to be friends again.

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